



Forest City community wastewater solution protects Crow River

September 2013 Snapshots



Through the dedication of four Forest City residents and lots of partners, the North Fork of the Crow River and nearby groundwater is now being protected through a community wastewater system.

Forest City, located a few miles north of Litchfield, Minn., is a small unincorporated village that is situated on the Crow River. Like many small communities in rural Minnesota, residents were dealing with significant issues related to treatment of wastewater and were in need of a local, cost-effective solution.

Resident Phil Valiant was one of the four residents who worked with Meeker County, and a number of state agencies to make this project happen. Valiant said the process began when a local subordinate service district was established.

“We all knew there were sewer systems in Forest City that were in desperate need of upgrading,” Valiant said. “We knew some sewers were straight-piped directly to the Crow River without any treatment. Because there is no place in the township to install a conventional sewer system, we decided to look into a community system.”



Twenty-one Forest City homes were connected through individual septic to the community system.

Valiant said the town board and the subordinate service district initially started out trying to find out how much a community system would cost and “the project just started rolling forward from that point.”

Forest City contracted with Wenck Associates to complete planning, design, and construction oversight, including a summary of the problem, consequences of potential solutions, and cost estimates for a community system.

Peter Miller, Wenck Associates Project Manager, said Forest City is similar to a lot of small communities in Minnesota.

“There are mature properties, paved streets, utilities, and water supply wells to work around and avoid. The success of the Forest City project can be attributed to the cooperation and flexibility of the homeowners around significant construction that occurred in their yards and on their streets,” Miller said. “The project could not have been completed without the cooperation of Meeker County and the Forest City Township Board for the financial management of the project.”

The project connected 21 individual septic systems that were either failing to protect groundwater or were imminent threats to public health. The system is estimated to reduce pollution to the Crow River by more than 3,700 pounds of nutrients per year.

Project dollars came from the Clean, Water, Land and Legacy Amendment through the Board of Water and Soil Resources (\$340,000 Clean Water Fund grant), Public Facilities Authority (\$135,000 loan and grant funds), and though Meeker County (\$75,000), which helped to offset the Forest City resident cost of constructing the system.

Valiant said the project was a success because of all of the partners involved. “I can’t believe all the help that we had with this project -- not just financial help, but professional and knowledgeable support to develop the system. Everyone is extremely satisfied, even the residents who were skeptical in the beginning,” Valiant said.